

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Congressman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (VA-03) joined House Gun Violence Prevention Task Force Chairman Mike Thompson (CA-05) in announcing the release of the Task Force's comprehensive set of policy principles designed to reduce gun violence. Congressman Scott is the Ranking Democratic Member of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security and Investigations, and is a Vice Chair of the House Gun Violence Prevention Task Force.

"I commend Chairman Thompson and the other members of the Task Force for their hard work and dedication in developing these principals," said Rep. Scott. "I am particularly pleased that the principals specifically endorse the need to enact evidence-based prevention and early intervention strategies. Sustained gun violence prevention is achievable through scientifically proven general violence prevention strategies. Such general violence prevention strategies require comprehensive, evidence-based services for at-risk children and families delivered through a collaborative plan involving law enforcement, social services, schools, mental health, businesses, non-profit, faith-based and other community-based organizations working with such children and families. This approach has been scientifically proven to not only greatly reduce gun violence and crime, but it also saves much more in avoided criminal justice and social welfare expenditures than the evidenced-based services cost."

"As a hunter and gun owner I believe we should protect a law-abiding individuals' 2nd Amendment right to own firearms," said Chairman Thompson. "As a father and grandfather I also believe that we have a responsibility to make our schools, streets and communities safe. This comprehensive set of policy principles accomplishes both those goals and Congress should act on them without delay. Moving forward I will use these recommendations to develop and influence legislation in both the House and Senate and work to get legislation based on these principles signed into law."

For nearly two months, the Gun Violence Prevention Task Force, under the leadership of Chairman Mike Thompson, has met with people on both sides of the aisle and all sides of the issue to develop a comprehensive set of policy principles that respect the 2nd Amendment and will make our schools, neighborhoods, and communities safer.

The task force met with and solicited input from victims of gun violence and gun safety advocates; gun owners, hunters, and outdoor sportsmen; federal, state, and local law enforcement; educators and community workers; mental health experts and physicians; representatives of the motion picture, television, music, and video game industries; leaders in our faith communities; and representatives of gun manufacturers and retailers, as well as cabinet secretaries and the Vice President of the United States. The task force also met with Members of Congress from all sides of the issue, and held hearings in Washington, DC to consider ways to address this issue.

The Gun Violence Prevention Task Force urges Congress to:

- **Support the 2nd Amendment rights of law-abiding Americans.** The United States Supreme Court affirmed individuals' 2nd rights to firearms in *District of Columbia v. Heller* (2008). However, the Supreme Court also held that "the right secured by the Second Amendment is not unlimited." Within the limits described by *Heller*, the federal government has the responsibility to take appropriate steps to protect our citizens from gun violence.
- **Support citizens' rights to possess firearms for hunting, shooting sports, defense, and other lawful and legitimate purposes** : In the United States, there is a long tradition of hunting and recreational shooting, and firearms are often passed down within families from generation to generation. Policies passed by Congress should respect this.
- **Reinstate and strengthen a prospective federal ban on assault weapons:** These weapons are designed to fire a large number of rounds in a short period of time. They constitute a lethal threat to law enforcement and other first responders.
- **Reinstate a prospective federal ban on assault magazines:** These magazines hold more than ten rounds and allow a shooter to inflict mass damage in a short period of time without reloading. Banning them will save lives.
- **Require a background check for every gun sale, while respecting reasonable exceptions for cases such as gifts between family members and temporary loans for sporting purposes:** It is estimated that four out of ten gun buyers do not go through a background check when purchasing a firearm because federal law only requires these checks when someone buys a gun from a federally licensed dealer. That would be like allowing four out of ten people to choose if they'd go through airport security. This loophole allows felons, domestic abusers, and those prohibited because of mental illness to easily bypass the criminal background check system and buy firearms at gun shows, through private sellers, over the internet or out of the trunks of cars.
- **Strengthen the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) database:** Immediate action is needed to ensure the information in the NICS database is up to date. Many federal and state agencies remain deficient in transferring important records to the database. Without the information, the background checks aren't complete. This needs to change.
- **Prosecute those prohibited buyers who attempt to purchase firearms and others who violate federal firearm laws:** Federal law bars nine categories of people—including felons and those prohibited because of mental illness—from buying guns. But when prohibited persons attempt to buy guns, they are hardly ever prosecuted. More can and must be done to make these investigations and prosecutions a priority.
- **Pass legislation aimed specifically at cracking down on illegal gun trafficking and straw-purchasing:** Straw-purchasing is when a prohibited buyer has someone with no criminal history walk into a gun store, pass a background check and purchase a gun with the purpose of giving it to the prohibited buyer. This puts guns in the hands of people who are

prohibited from having them. Congress should pass a law that will put an end to this practice.

- **Restore funding for public safety and law enforcement initiatives aimed at reducing gun violence:** Congress should fund law enforcement's efforts to reduce gun violence, while supporting federal research into causes of gun violence. Put simply, there is no reason the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) or the National Institute of Health (NIH) should be inhibited from researching the causes of gun violence. And there is no reason for the restrictions federal law places on our law enforcement officers' ability to track and combat the spread of illegal guns.

- **Support initiatives that prevent problems before they start:** Local communities should have assistance in applying evidence-based prevention and early intervention strategies that are designed to prevent the problems that lead to gun violence before those problems start.

- **Close the holes in our mental-health system and make sure that care is available for those who need it:** Congress must improve prevention, early intervention, and treatment of mental illness while working to eliminate the stigma associated with mental illness. Access to mental health services should be improved, the shortage of mental health professionals should be addressed, and funding should be made available for those programs that have proven to be effective.

- **Help our communities get unwanted and illegal guns out of the hands of those who don't want them or shouldn't have them:** Congress should help support and develop local programs that get unwanted guns off our streets. And Congress should work with states to develop programs that get guns out of the hands of those convicted of certain crimes or those prohibited because of mental illness.

- **Support responsible gun ownership:** Congress should support safety training, research aimed at developing new gun safety technologies and the safe storage of firearms.

- **Take steps to enhance school safety.** Congress must help all schools implement evidence-based strategies that support safe learning environments tailored to the unique needs of students and local communities. And Congress must work with all schools to develop emergency response plans.

- **Address our culture's glorification of violence seen and heard through our movie screens, television shows, music and video games:** Congress should fund scientific research on the relationship between popular culture and gun violence, while ensuring that parents have access to the information they need to make informed decisions about what their families watch, listen to, and play.

[Click here to download the Task Force's full set of recommendation.](#)

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